Freshman wins big in interscholastic sports

Zuri Anderson
Staf Writer

Freshman Nick Wellons went to the South Carolina Court of Appeals to propose a bill that limits the amount of funding that goes into interscholastic sports last Wednesday to Friday.

"The purpose of the bill is to change the laws on how money is allowed to be allocated for public schools' sports facilities and re-allocate money into other areas such as buying new textbooks or updating classroom technology," Wellons said.

A sports management major, Wellons' inspiration came from his experience in an underfunded public school: Woodruff High School.

"We've had technology issues every single year I was there. It's always something breaking, something not working, something too slow. There were days where we weren't able to do what a lot of schools are able to do," Wellons said.

Woodruff is one of the least funded public schools in South Carolina, making $9,578 per pupil versus some schools in Spartanburg County that make up to $16 thousand per pupil, according to Wellons' research.

Despite that, Woodruff is the only school in Spartanburg County to receive the Palmetto Gold Award for 12 years, the most in the county, according to the school's executive summary from January 2016.

"Woodruff has no choice. They have to throw a lot of money into education. If they don't, they don't have a school. Instead of putting it into education and new textbooks, they are putting it into sports facilities," Wellons said.

Wellons supports sports expansion, but he noticed that expensive contracts go to interscholastic sports, making sports activities more about profit and incentives.

"That's where you want to see more of sport for sport and not for money," Wellons said.

In 2012, a $60 million football stadium was built for Allen High School in Texas, which seats over 18,000 people, according to the Los Angeles Times. McKinney Independent School District had plans for a $70 million stadium to compete against Allen High School.

Wellons is involved with the South Carolina Student Legislature on Winthrop's campus, a student-run mock legislature between Winthrop and 11 other colleges anduniversities in South Carolina. With the help of sophomore Heidi Hearne, president of SCSL at Winthrop, he learned how to write a bill.

He started his project in early September and the bill was his original idea. Wellons also had research assistance from S.C. Senator Shane Martin of District 13.

Wellons and Hearne attended a committee last Wednesday where the bill was debated in the House of Representatives and Senate. On Thursday, the Senate tabled, or put off, the bill until Friday morning due to lack of internet from low state funding.

On Friday morning, Wellons' bill passed the Senate and House with no down votes.

"They believe that schools shouldn't be allowed to spend big money on sports instead of arts and education," Wellons said about the Senate's reason for passing the bill.

Photo courtesy of Nick Wellons

Nick Wellons in the meeting room of the Court of Appeals in Columbia, SC.

Wellons expected some challenges. Based on his research, Wellons found that some of the South Carolina politicians played sports in high school. He also participated in a mock senate with his bill in preparation for the Court of Appeals.

Wellons said that Winthrop was an opportunity to work on his ideas due to its open environment.

"In many regions and colleges around the state, they probably won't be as open. New ideas every day are being introduced, and they like to nurture them and see them grow. I think Winthrop likes to see them try and attempt," Wellons said.

Freshman Sydney Strother had similar experiences when she was in the band program at Midland Valley High School in Graniteville, South Carolina.

"All the money was allocated to sports. I was in band, and we got no funding. We had a lot of fundraisers but I still had to pay out of pocket a lot. Athletics didn't pay anything," Strother said.

Strother had to pay $450 a year, with an extra payment for marching in eighth grade and another $600 for doing a march in Philadelphia. Strother said her bill ran to almost $3,000 for participation in the small high school band.

"I just don't think it's fair that one organization has to work so much harder for the money than the other," Strother said.

Bring this ad to our office by Friday, December 2nd, 2016 and we'll waive your Administration Fee!*

WATERFORD TERRACE

803.328.0085 • WWW.WATERFORDTERRACEAPTS.COM
823 CARMEN WAY • ROCK HILL, SC • 29730

*Certain restrictions apply. Offer ends 12/2/2016.

VOTING:
the athlete's perspective

Taylor Simpson
simpsont@mytjnow.com

There will be many college athletes who will use their American rights and go out to vote, and there will be some athletes who do not see the significance in voting. With the election coming up, everyone's vote is a vital part of deciding between Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Gary Johnson, Jill Stein or Evan McMullin to become the next president.

The election does not just affect the people in the United States and the people in surrounding countries. The election is a crucial decision that will affect many countries around the world for more than just four the new president will be in office.

In certain circumstances the election may have an influence on whether foreign students and athletes will consider playing a sport and getting an education in the United States.

Winthrop's Louise Jeppesen is a junior golfer who is from Helsingborg, Sweden, where, similar to countries such as the United Kingdom, Spain, Netherlands and Belgium, they have a constitutional monarchy.

In Sweden, King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden has been reigning since 1973 after the death of his grandfather, King Gustaf VI Adolf. While the prime minister is in charge of the country and deals with all the government issues, the king is a figurehead of the country. The Prime Minister of Sweden is Stefan Lofven, and he has been in power since 2014.

Louise Jeppesen said, "In Sweden the election is a big deal. It is also on every front page of every newspaper. Most people are voting for Hillary and think the world will collapse if Trump wins."

With the United States government being a democratic republic, there are many differences between the United States and other countries. Some differences include education, healthcare, immigration policies and taxes.

Louise Jeppesen said, "I don't really know what I think. The American political society is so strange from Sweden. I am for free health care and free education at any level as it is in Sweden. However, one thing everyone keeps saying back home: whoever wins, you have to remember everyone who voted for the other one."

The election has even promoted a new rule for Towson's men's basketball team. According to CBS, their head coach Pat Skerry and associate athletic director Antwaine Smith are having every member of the basketball team register to vote. Whether the Towson players are from nearby Baltimore or faraway Missouri or Florida, every player will be voting Nov. 8, or they will be voting absentee.

Pat Skerry said, "I'm not a big political guy, or on a soapbox, but with this I think it's important this year, more than any other, for them to cast their vote for whomever they want."

Skerry hopes making his players vote will reflect on the rights we have as Americans to choose our own president. Skerry also wants his decision not only to inspire other Towson teams but also to encourage other college men's basketball programs to get their players to go out and vote.